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A Massachusetts Chartbook

Aid to Families with Dependent Children

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A Publication of the
Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare

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A Massachusetts Chartbook

Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) is the Federal-State program that provides cash benefits to needy families with children. During the 1979 fiscal year, over 121,000 Massachusetts families received about $458 million in benefits. AFDC recipients are also eligible for medical and social services.

In order for a family to qualify for AFDC, there must be children who are deprived of the financial support of one of their parents due to death, disability, absence from the home, or unemployment. Also, the family's income must fall below a "needs standard". The actual amount of an AFDC payment depends on the number of persons in the assistance group and, of course, the amount of other income.

Data obtained from sample surveys of AFDC families provide estimates of the characteristics of AFDC recipients and their families.

This chartbook outlines information learned from the 1979 AFDC Recipient Characteristics Study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and from the 1979 Welfare Caseload Dynamics Survey conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare (Mass. DPW).

More complete data are available from the Office of Research and Evaluation of the Massachusetts DPW.

This Massachusetts chartbook is modelled after the Social Security Administration's "Aid to Families With Dependent Children: A Chartbook", which presents similar information for the country as a whole. The cooperation of the Social Security Administration's research staff, particularly Howard Oberheu and Charles Taylor, is appreciated.

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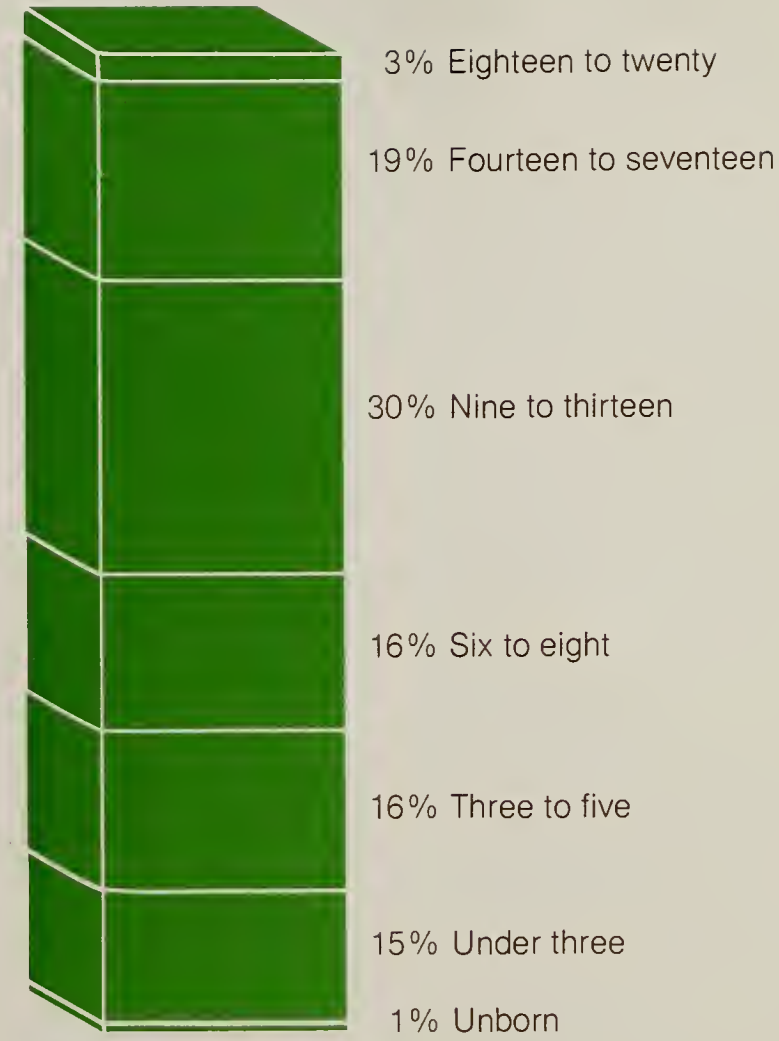
Children receiving AFDC are typically young

Almost one-third of Massachusetts AFDC children are under 6, and nearly half are between 6 and 13 years of age. About one of every five of the state's AFDC children is over 14 years of age.

1979 AFDC Recipient Characteristics Study (HHS)



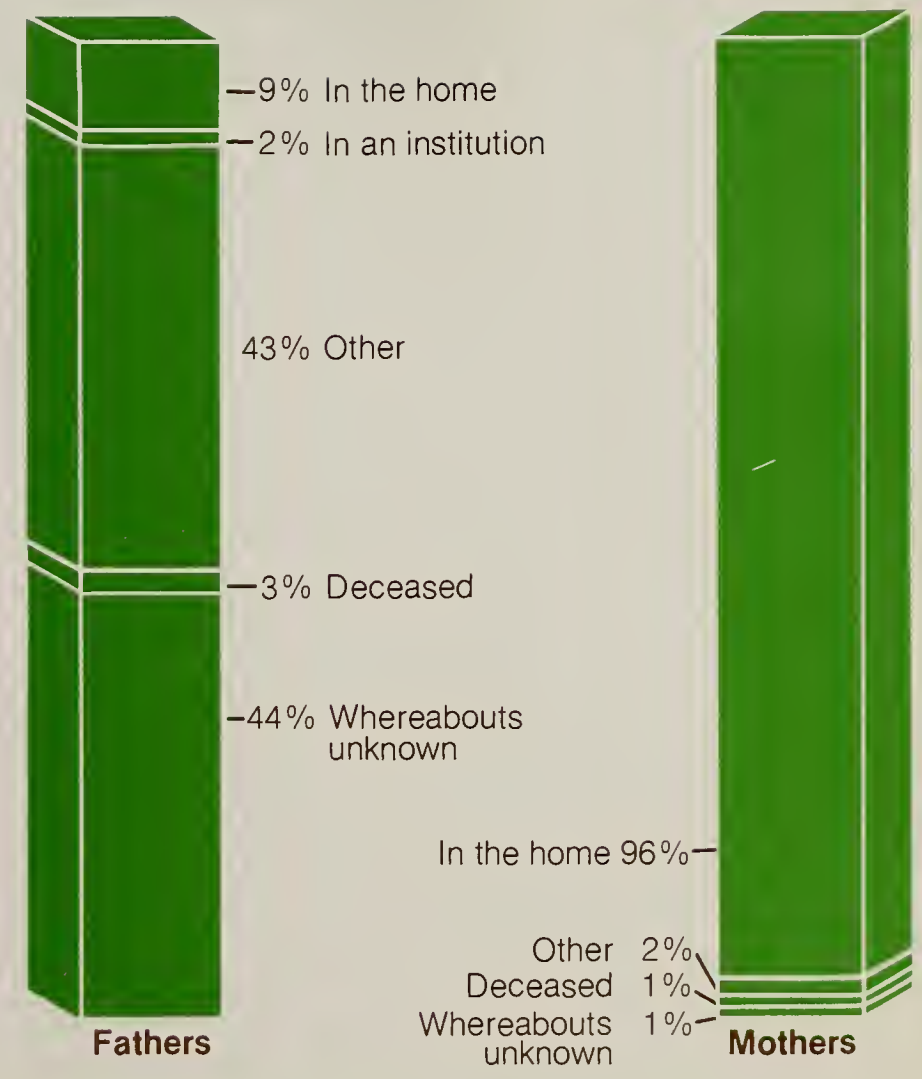
AFDC children by age group

2

Almost all AFDC children live with their mothers

Ninety-six percent of Massachusetts AFDC children live with their mothers. Almost 9% have fathers at home, down from 17% in 1969. The whereabouts of 44% of the fathers are unknown.

1979 AFDC Recipient Characteristics Study (HHS)



Residence of parents of AFDC children

3

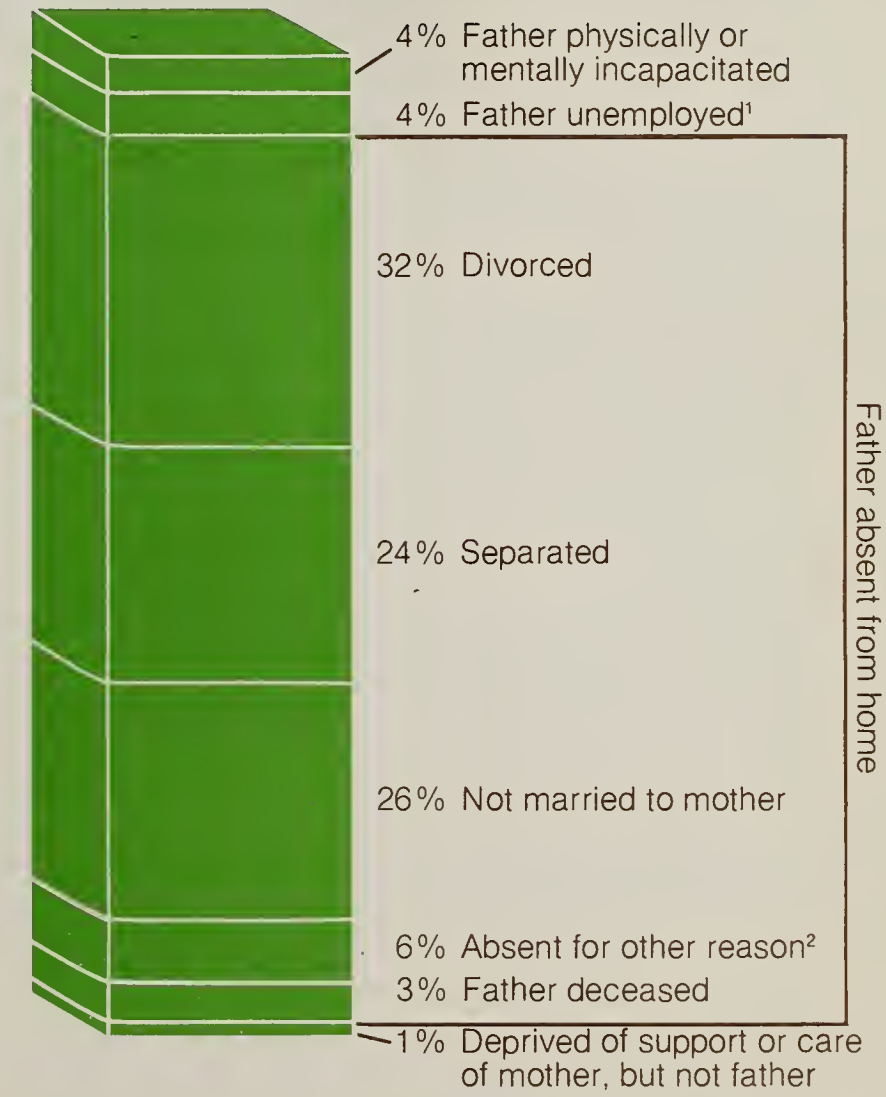
Children who receive AFDC usually are eligible because their fathers do not live at home and provide little or no support

Ninety-one percent of Massachusetts AFDC children have no father at home. Fifty-six percent have parents who are divorced or separated. Another 26% have parents who are not married to each other. A small number of children have fathers who are absent for other reasons.

On the other hand, 9% of Massachusetts AFDC children have fathers who do live at home with them. About half of these fathers living at home are disabled, while the other half have exhausted unemployment benefits and meet additional requirements of the AFDC program for unemployed parents.

1979 AFDC Recipient Characteristics Study (HHS)

1. As of June, 1979, eligibility for AFDC was extended to include unemployed mothers on the same basis as fathers.
2. Includes proportion of children deprived of support due to father's service in the Armed Forces.



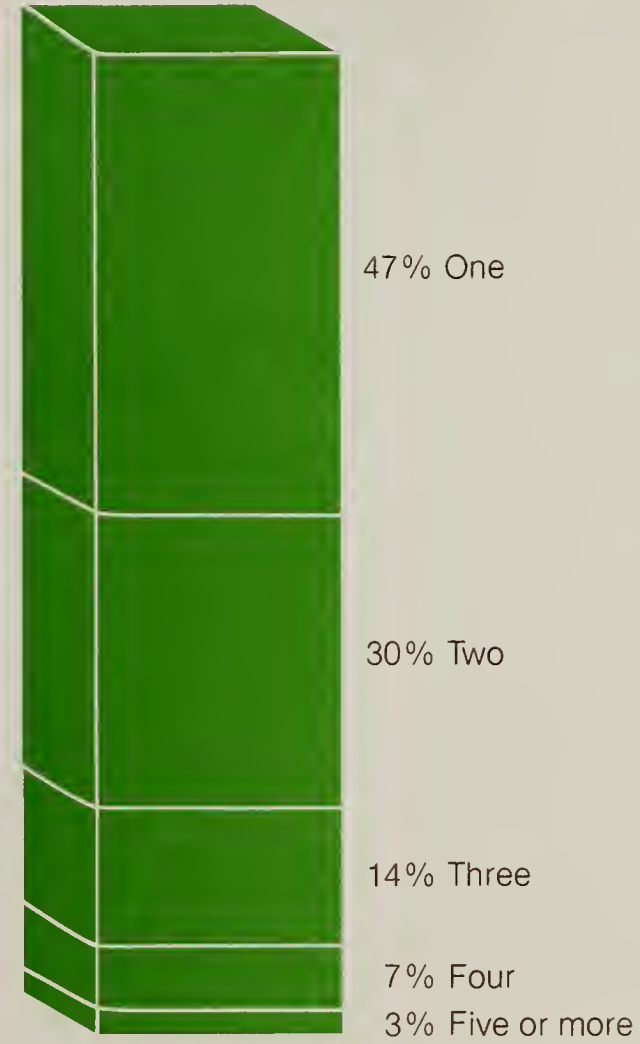
Reason deprived of support

4

Most AFDC families have few children

Massachusetts families receiving AFDC are small, with only one in ten having more than three children in 1979, and the average family having 1.9 children. A decade earlier, the average AFDC family in the state had 2.8 children, while one in three had more than three children.

1979 AFDC Recipient Characteristics Study (HHS)



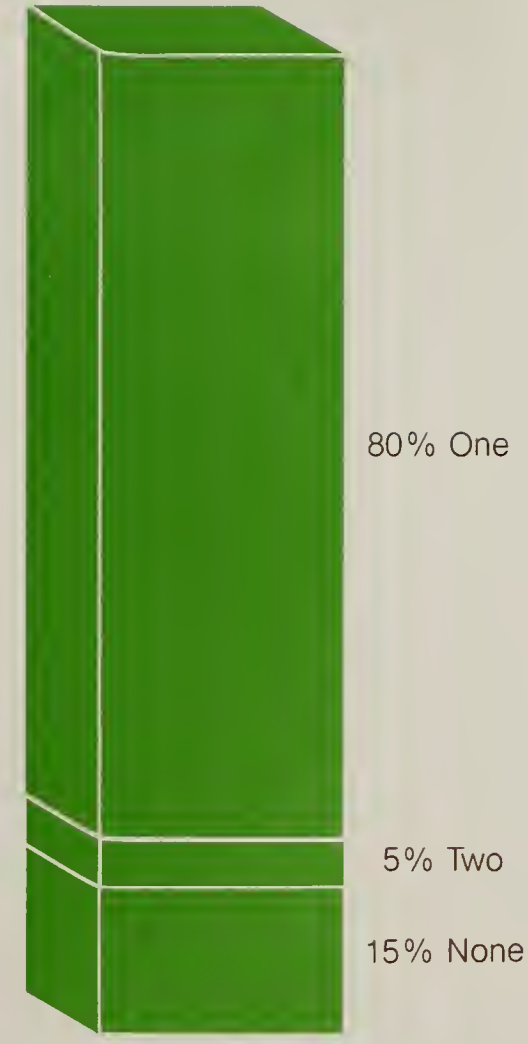
AFDC families by number of children

5

Almost all AFDC families have only one adult recipient

Four of five Massachusetts AFDC families have only one adult recipient (usually the mother). One in twenty families has two adults who receive aid, while in other families aid is provided only for certain children. The proportion of AFDC families receiving aid for two adults has decreased during the past decade (from 7% in 1969 to 5% in 1979).

1979 AFDC Recipient Characteristics Study (HHS)



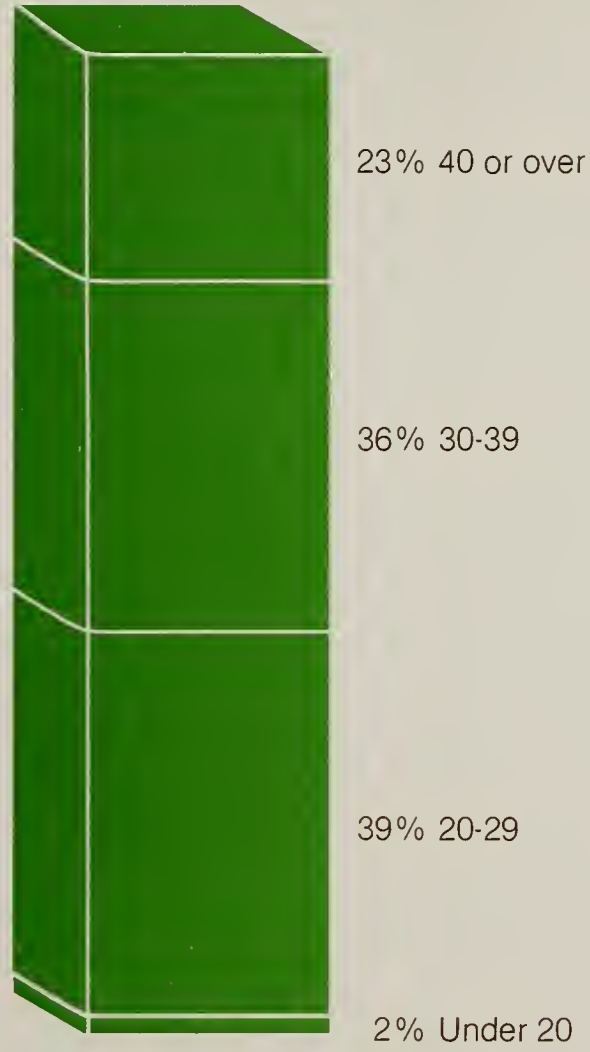
Number of adult recipients in AFDC families

6

AFDC families typically are headed by young adults

Most Massachusetts AFDC adults are in their twenties (39%) or thirties (36%). Two percent are teenagers. About 23%, on the other hand, are over forty years of age.

1979 Welfare Caseload Dynamics Survey (Mass. DPW)



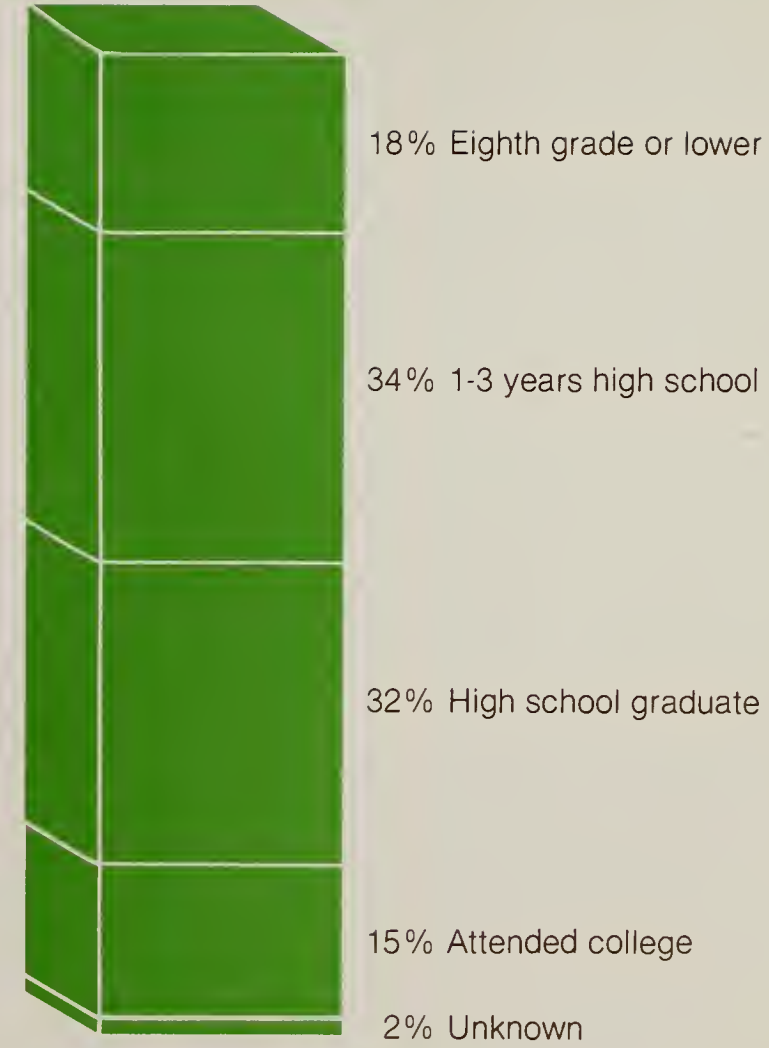
AFDC adults by age group

7

Almost half of AFDC adults have high school diplomas

Forty-seven percent of Massachusetts AFDC adults have high school diplomas. Another 34% have attended high school but did not graduate. Eighteen percent have only finished the eighth grade or less.

1979 Welfare Caseload Dynamics Survey (Mass. DPW)



Education of AFDC adults

8

Some AFDC adults work

During 1979, about one of every five Massachusetts AFDC adults was employed.

AFDC grants are adjusted in amount to take account of any additional sources of income besides a family's AFDC grant. The AFDC program contains built-in incentives to encourage AFDC adults to seek employment.

1979 Welfare Caseload Dynamics Survey (Mass. DPW)

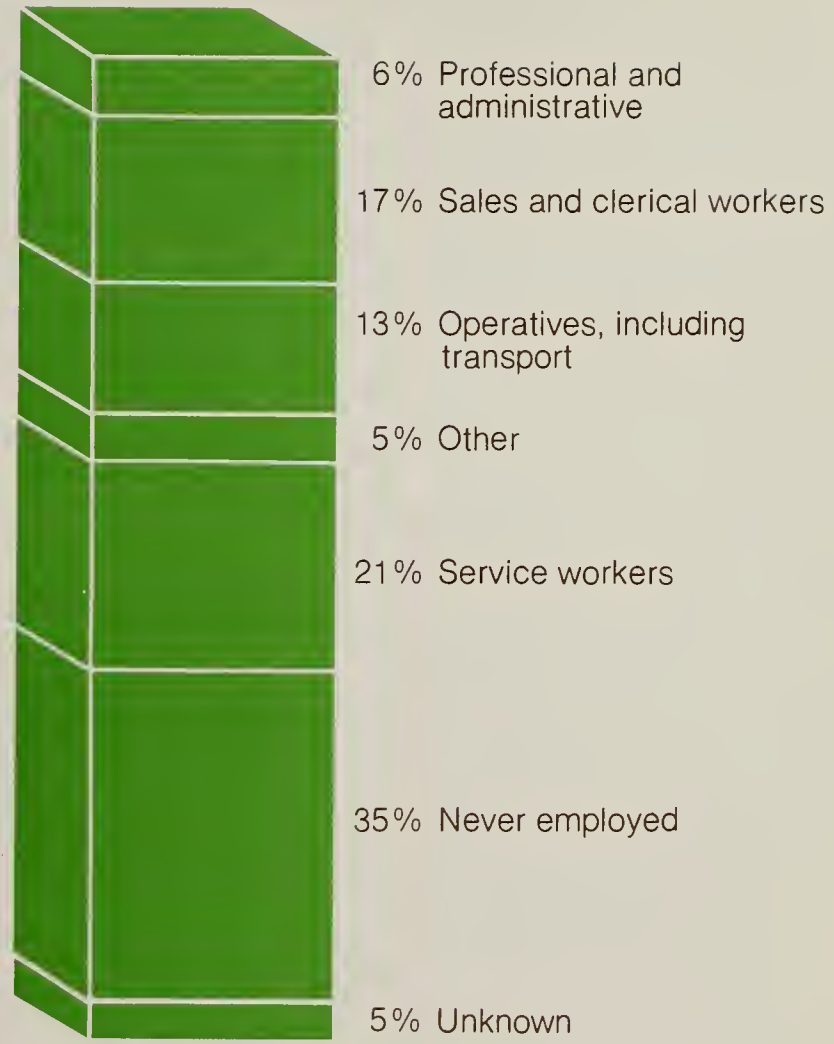
Employment status of AFDC adults

9

Most AFDC adults hold or have held service, sales, or clerical jobs

Out of those Massachusetts AFDC adults reporting a work history, 65% have been employed during the past four years. Considerable variety exists in the types of work experiences which these adults have had. The largest proportion (about one in three) has worked in a service occupation, though about one in four has had sales or clerical experience.

1979 Welfare Caseload Dynamics Survey (Mass. DPW)

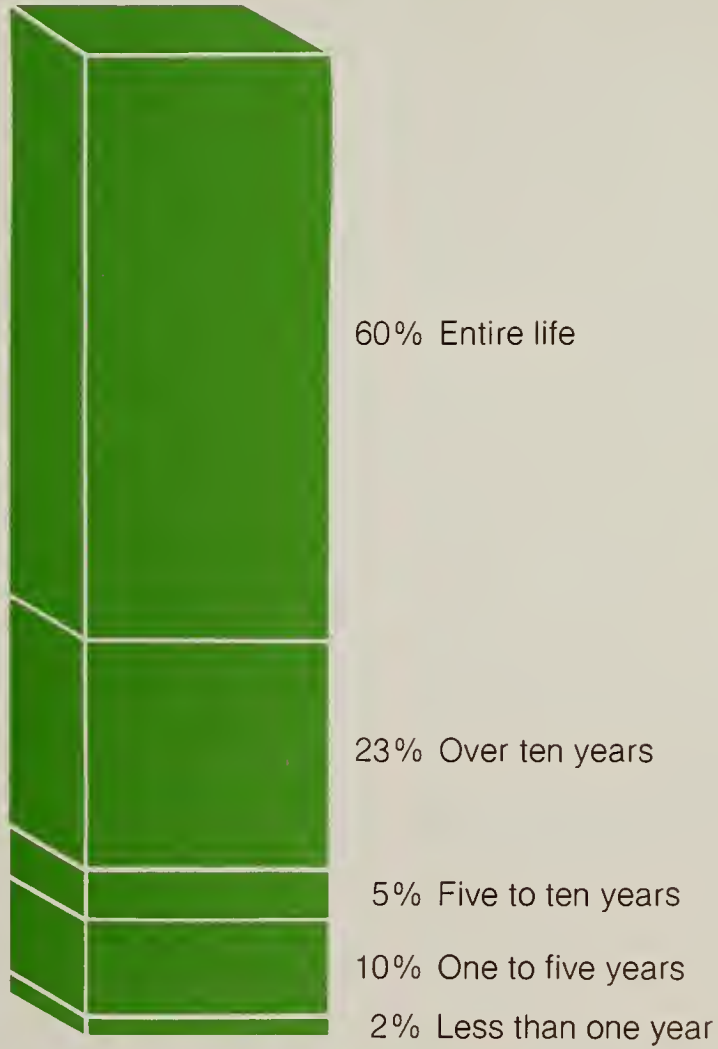


Occupations of AFDC adults

10

Most AFDC adults are Massachusetts born

Almost 60% of AFDC adults were born in Massachusetts and have lived in the state their entire lives. Another 23% have lived in the state for over ten years. Only 2% have moved to Massachusetts within the past year.



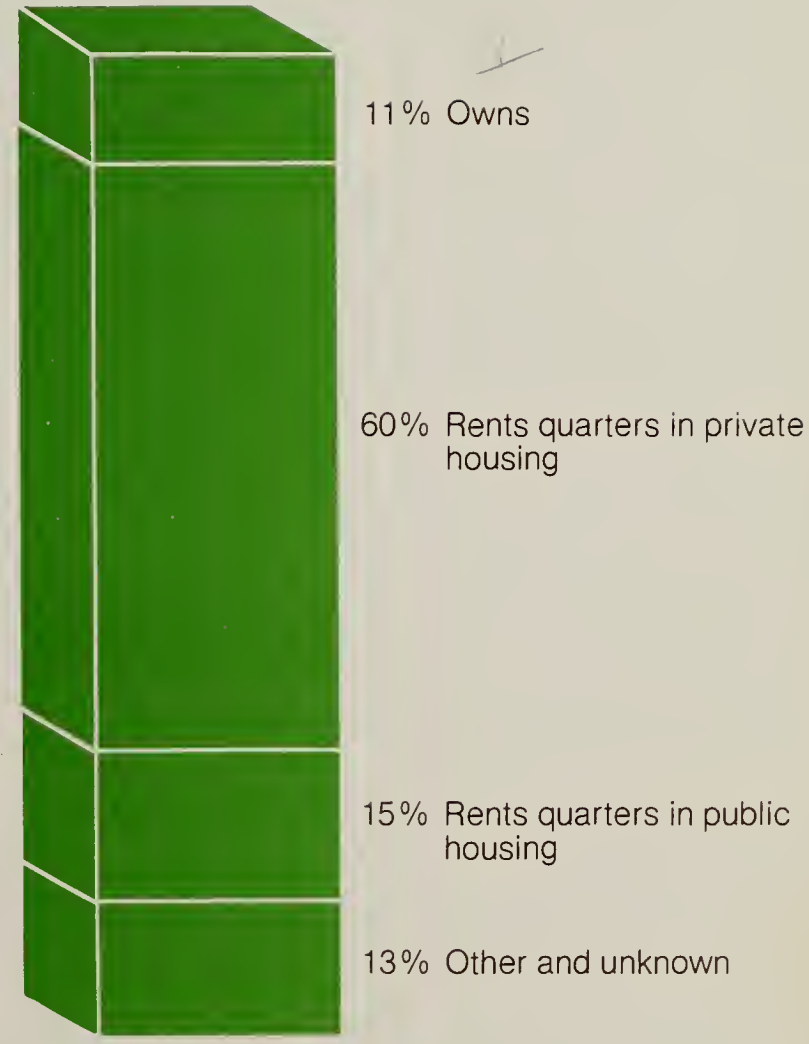
1979 Welfare Caseload Dynamics Survey (Mass. DPW)

11

Almost all AFDC families rent their homes

Three out of four Massachusetts AFDC families rent. Almost one in seven live in public housing. About one in nine Massachusetts AFDC families own homes. The average rent/mortgage payment is $151.00, while the estimated average heating and utility costs total $64.10.

1979 Welfare Caseload Dynamics Survey (Mass. DPW)



Housing of AFDC families

12

Benefits available for an AFDC family of three with no other income

A Massachusetts AFDC family of three receives an average of $357.70 in AFDC cash benefits each month, and $108.00 in Food Stamps. An AFDC family is also eligible for medical services under the Medicaid program, and social services through the new Department of Social Services.

13

Almost all AFDC families receive Food Stamps

Four of five Massachusetts AFDC families receive Food Stamps, a proportion that has steadily risen since the U.S. Department of Agriculture began the program in 1964. Food Stamps help low-income families stretch their food dollars by allowing them to receive an allotment of stamps that is exchanged for food. A household's Food Stamp allotment varies according to the family's needs.

1979 AFDC Recipient Characteristics Study (HHS)

1. Less than one percent.

78% Participate in public assistance Food Stamps program

22% Do not participate in public assistance Food Stamps program

—[1] Unknown

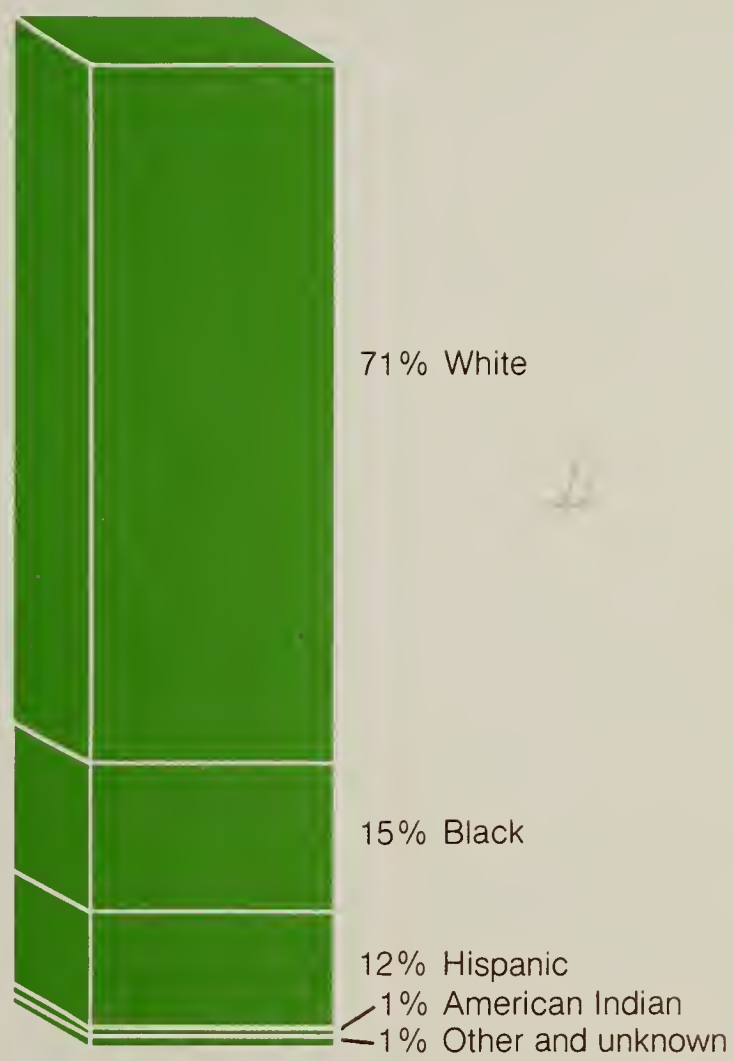
Households certified to receive public assistance Food Stamps

14

Most AFDC families are white

Seventy-one percent of Massachusetts AFDC families are white. Just over 15% are black. A little over 12% are Hispanic families.

1979 AFDC Recipient Characteristics Study (HHS)



AFDC families by race and ethnicity

This publication is based upon results of sample surveys of Massachusetts AFDC families conducted during March, 1979, by the Social Security Administration, and during January, 1979, by the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare.

More detailed information is available from the Office of Research and Evaluation, Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare, 600 Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02111.

Definition of terms

AFDC Family — a household unit with at least one child receiving AFDC ("child" could include an unborn child) and experiencing some form of parental deprivation, and at least one parent or relative who is related to the child by blood or marriage.

AFDC Adult — the parent or relative whose name appears on the AFDC check (for roughly 5% of the AFDC families where the deprivation was unemployment of the father, the father was considered the AFDC adult).

Office of Research and Evaluation
Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare
600 Washington Street
Boston MA 02111